

REMARKS

I. Introduction

With the cancellation herein without prejudice of claim 1 and the addition of new claims 11 to 17, claims 2 to 17 are pending in the present application. In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable, and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicants note with appreciation the acknowledgment of the claim for foreign priority and the indication that all certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

Applicants thank the Examiner for considering the Information Disclosure Statement, PTO-1449 paper and cited reference filed on July 24, 2003. Applicants note that an initialed copy of the PTO-1449 paper submitted with a Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement, which was filed on February 18, 2004, was not attached to the present Office Action. Enclosed herewith is a courtesy copy of the Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement and PTO-1449 paper, both indicating receipt by the United States Patent and Trademark Office on February 20, 2004. Applicants respectfully request consideration of the Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement, PTO-1449 paper and cited references and respectfully request an initialed copy of the PTO-1449 paper with the next Office communication.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants note with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter contained in claims 2 to 8. In this regard, the Examiner will note that claim 2 has been rewritten herein in independent form to include all of the limitations of its base claim. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claim 2 is in condition for immediate allowance. Claims 3 to 8 ultimately depend from claim 2 and are therefore also believed to be in condition for immediate allowance.

Claim 9 has been amended herein without prejudice to depend from claim 2. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claim 9 is also in condition for immediate allowance.

III. Rejection of Claims 1, 9 and 10 Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1, 9 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,357,434. While Applicants do not necessarily agree with the merits of this rejection, to facilitate matters, claim 1 has been canceled herein without prejudice, claim 9 has been amended herein without prejudice to depend from claim 2, which was indicated to include allowable subject matter, and claim 10 has been amended herein to include features analogous to features included in claim 2. It is therefore respectfully submitted that the present rejection is moot, and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

IV. New Claims 11 to 17

New claims 11 to 17 have been added herein . It is respectfully submitted that claims 11 to 17 add no new matter and are fully supported by the present application, including the Specification. Claims 11 to 17 ultimately depend from claim 10. Since claim 10 has been amended herein without prejudice to include features analogous to features included in claim 2, which was indicated to include allowable subject matter, it is respectfully submitted that claims 11 to 17 are patentable over the reference relied upon for at least the same reasons that claim 2 was indicated to include allowable subject matter.

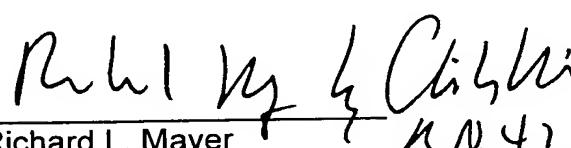
V. Conclusion

It is therefore respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable. All issues raised by the Examiner having been addressed, an early and favorable action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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